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In Focus

I write this editorial in the shadow of death, that of the great doyenne of Carnatic music D.K. Pattammal, whose chaste music was a solid, comforting presence for at least 3 generations of listeners. I still remember an old tape with a young D.K. Pattammal on the cover which was a prized possession of my grandmother's in their Mandaiveli house. This demise compounded our other recent loss of mrudangam maestro Palghat Raghu. N. Hariharan pays homage to Palghat Raghu in an article. On a happier note though, we're still fortunate to listen to more torch-bearers of this chaste heritage like Parassala Ponnammal who recently performed for the sabha and was gracious enough to talk to Shanmukha on the eve of her recital. An interview with her follows V. Sivaramakrishnan's homage to K.B. Sundarambal, who was one of the most recognizable voices of Tamil music (popular and classical) of the last century and whose birth centenary slipped by us in 2008.

Dr. Bhuvaneshwari's article on Sanskrit Compositions of the prolific composer Thyagaraja, includes descriptions of various mythological allusions in these compositions. Why is it that a kriti rendered by one artiste seems to glow, whereas it seems to pale when rendered by another artiste of the same caliber? Why is it that some renditions seem to bring out the essence of the raga, and the sangatis flow in an easy and instinctive progression? The answers to these questions lie in Pathantaram - A Musical Value. N. Hariharan unravels the musical lineage spawned by Thyagaraja in a two-part article. *Musical Musings* has Sakuntala Narasimhan reminiscing on her experiences of learning from the great classical masters of the previous generation.

Geetha Radhakrishna takes us through her thrilling journey from her 1st to 100th Narayaneeyam dance recital in the article *Bhakti in Narayaneeyam*. Janaki Krishnamoorthy reports on the conferment of Bodhaka Award on vidwan Kalyani Sharma. P. P. Ramachandran reviews Zubin Mehta's autobiography *The Score of My Life*.

In a happy coincidence, at the same time that we first asked our readers to write in, we were surprised with four letters! And so we've started a new column Readerspeak which will be your podium to air your views. Nalini Dinesh covers happenings at the Sabha and Vidyalyaya. Readers, put on your thinking caps and get started on Hema Veeramani's musical Crossword!

□

HOMAGE TO MAESTRO PALGHAT RAGHU

by N. Hariharan

The world of Carnatic music has suffered an irreparable loss in the sudden demise by cardiac arrest of mrudangam maestro Sangita Kalanidhi Palghat R. Raghu on 2nd June 2009 at the age of 81. He evolved a unique style, combining the finer features of yesteryear stalwarts Palani Subramania Pillai and Palghat T.S. Mani Iyer. He captivated the connoisseur as much as the lay listener, as the veteran mrudangam vidwan Sangita Kalanidhi Umayalpuram Sivaraman stated in his homage. With effortless ease he played pleasing permutations of tonal notes (chollus) which enthralled the audience. A percussionist like him is born rarely.

Rangoon-born Raghu was initiated into music early by his first teacher Tinniyam Venkatarama Iyer. When his parents left Burma and came to settle at Palghat, Raghu became a pupil of the famed Mani Iyer. He adopted Palani Subramania Pillai as his 'manasika guru' whose influence one could notice in the maestro's music, says a disciple of Subramania Pillai, K.S. Kalidas. Raghu revered his guru fondly all his life. At the Music Academy Sangita Kalanidhi award function in 2007, he spoke about his first meeting with Palghat Mani Iyer. He reminisced, "I heard him and I was entranced. I wanted nothing else but to be in his presence; to learn from him and play

like him. It became an obsession."

He valued playing for peers as much as for the established veterans, which reveals that he had no snobbish notions. He was an accompanist for artistes across generations. He was a regular sideman for Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, G. N. Balasubramaniam, Alathur Brothers and Madurai Mani Iyer, as also for T.N. Krishnan, Lalgudi G. Jayaraman, M.S. Gopalakrishnan and N. Ramani (flautist). With singer Palghat K.V. Narayanaswamy, Raghu made a memorable combination. Youngsters could learn from him as to how a percussionist can uplift the performance of the main artiste.

He supported the younger generation by providing accompaniment to artistes like Mandolin Srinivas and Vijay Siva.

Raghu took interest in Hindustani music and western instrumental. He had accompanied sitar legend Pandit Ravi Shankar, had teamed up with tabla maestro Allah Rakha, and violin virtuoso Yehudi Menuhin. As an artiste he painted on a broad canvas. A man of wide interests, he will inspire generations of musicians in the future.

No tribute will be complete if one does not

recall the many awards he had received in his long career, though they sat lightly on him. He won the national honour - Padma Shri, Tamil Nadu state award Kalaimamani, and the Krishna Gana Sabha title Sangeetha Choodamani among others. He has trained many students who will keep alive his legacy. His disciples Trichur Narendran, Manoj Siva, Bombay Balaji and Trivandrum Balaji are prominent in the

concert circuit. His grandsons, vocalist Abhishek Raghuram, and mridangist Anand are performing artistes who are keeping the family tradition alive. Raghu has departed from the world but he will shine forever in the musical galaxy.

(N. Hariharan was a concert reviewer for "The Times of India," Bombay, for 34 years) □

OBITUARY



Ustad Ali Akbar Khan

Renowned sarod player Ustad Ali Akbar Khan passed away on 18 June 2009. He was 87. Son of the legendary Ustad Alauddin Khan, he was nominated for Grammy Awards five times between 1970 and 1998. He was the first Indian musician to receive the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship in 1991 and the first to cut a long play record of Indian classical music in the U.S. and to give a sarod recital on American TV. He was a recipient of the Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan.

A CENTENARY HOMAGE - K. B. SUNDARAMBAL

by V. Sivaramakrishnan

In one of his memorable songs, Saint Thyagaraja (1759 – 1847) affirmed for all time the nexus between music and devotion in Indian music or, more precisely, in the Carnatic classical music system. In his popular Dhanyasi piece, *Sangeetha jnanamu bhakti – vina sanmargamu galade*, he links up knowledge of music (Sangeetha jnanamu) with the path of righteousness or, by implication, the path of salvation. The connecting medium is bhakti. Thyagaraja himself set an illustrious example of composing songs inspired by his 'ishthadeva' (favourite deity) Sri Rama as well as the other Gods of the Hindu pantheon. It may not be incorrect to presume that he would have expected the singers of his songs to be like-minded; to render his krithis in a spirit of devotion.

It redounds to the credit of great musicians of the Carnatic music tradition that, by and large, bhakti remains the aadhara-sruti of their rendering. This is all the more remarkable because the commercialism of the music sabhas, and the introduction of the 'Katcheri – paddhati' from the early decades of the last century, could have had a corrupting influence on the minds of the concert – singers. But, will it be true to say that there is no trace at all of the institutional commercialism and individual money-mindedness in the world of organized music? There are, however, fine exemplars of integrity and, of the older generation, there is one among many who deserves to be remembered in the centenary year of her birth. She is K. B. Sundarambal (1908-

1980), KBS for short.

K o d u m u d i
B a l a m b a l
Sundarambal was a gifted singer who shared with one of her illustrious contemporaries, M. S. Subbulakshmi, a

deep sense of dedication to music and devotion to God. But unlike M.S., she was denied the support of a husband all through her life. KBS lost her husband when she was only 26, after a somewhat unsteady marital life for a short period of six years.

The spouse was the thespian and singer, Sengottai Gangadhara Iyer Kittappa (1906-1933). They first met on the stage in 1927, not in India but in Sri Lanka, where they established instant rapport, not merely as lovers but as singers in a high pitched voice. They got married in 1927 in a temple at Mayavaram. There was much opposition to their partnership in life (not on stage) as it was an inter-caste marriage. For some reasons (those given by his biographers and other writers are not clear and convincing) Kittappa took to heavy drinking. Perhaps, because of this addiction, Kittappa's life was cut short when he was only 27 (Dec 2, 1933). KBS was thus widowed at a young age of 25 but she cherished his memory till the very end of her days - she was 72 when she passed away- denying herself many good things



of life. She sought to compensate her self-denial, a fine trait of her character, by her devotion to Muruga, her favourite deity. Sundarambal's devotional songs like 'Murugan Endradumey', 'Muruga enbadu unnaitaano', 'Idayamaaraada bhaktikundu' and 'Ellam valla iraiyan' were an inspiration not only to devotees but also to singers like T. M. Soundararajan and Sirkazhi Govindarajan*.

Before she became a full-time propagator of Muruga-bhakti, KBS sought to arouse the patriotic spirit of the people at a time when it was sorely needed. The country was straining at the leash for freedom. She was drawn into the political arena by one of the early Congress leaders of the new Madras Presidency, the redoubtable S. Satyamurti, in the thirties of the last century. She was the star attraction at the public meetings held in connection with the municipal elections and the general elections of 1937. She sang Bharatiyar's patriotic songs and songs on Gandhiji and his principles and programmes during the days of electioneering. She travelled over 9000 miles and addressed on an average ten meetings a day*.

Satyamurti, with a paternal solicitude, also persuaded KBS to enter the film world which held no attractions for her. She laid down a condition that she would touch no male and as far as possible, restrict herself to singing only devotional songs. She acted in 12 films during a period of about four decades- from 'Nandanar' in 1935 to 'Tirumalai deivam' in 1973. In Nandanar, she played the male role of 'Nandan', the ardent devotee of Siva. Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer (1898-1970), who was one

of the early stalwarts of Carnatic music and was much older than KBS, played the role of the tyrannical landlord, who refuses Nandan permission to go to the temple-town of Chidambaram, to worship Lord Nataraja. It is said that there were embarrassing moments when Maharajapuram was required to bow before KBS, who acted as Nandan, but prestige did not stand in his way. He bowed to Nandan in recognition of his spiritual attainments. Among the ragas in which KBS excelled in her film songs were Shanmukhapriya, Kharaharapriya, Mohanam, Todi, Sindhubhairavi, Kapi, and Kedaragoula*.

Of the 12 films in which she acted, KBS donned the mantle of Avvaiyar, the legendary poetess of Tamil Nadu, who is regarded next only to Tiruvalluvar in ethical teachings, in atleast five films. Thus, bhakti, patriotism and ethics were the values KBS propagated and followed in her own life. She practised what she preached. S. S. Vasan raised her to Everest heights as a singer in that landmark film, "Avvaiyar" (1953). The songs for "Avvaiyar" were composed by Papanasam Sivan and Kothamangalam Subbu, who also directed the film. "Avvaiyar", with the Sringararasa on a low key and ethics predominating, set up a record as a box office hit as well as a popular film at the mass level. Its songs, *Ayyane...anbaarku meyyane, Kannit-tamizhnaatinile vennilaave, Velane Sentamizh vithaga* among others, reverberated through the land even as KBS became a household word.

KBS sang, in a voice that rang like a temple

bell, about 200 songs in her life, almost all of them devotional or ethical or both, KBS herself had composed a few songs. She sang songs not only in Tamil, but in Telugu, Malayalam and Sanskrit. In the later years of her life, when she became the counterpart of Tirumuruga Kripinanda Warriar, she was successful in 'creating an ambience of living faith'. Her classical concerts boasted of orderly ragas, essays full of bhavas, a good range of compositions mostly in Tamil but punctuated with Telugu and Sanskrit masterpieces, as well as interesting swarasinging and niraval. She excelled in ragas like Shankarabharanam, Saveri, Kedaragoula and Kambhoji*.

Honours came to her rather late in life-Isai Perarinar, Padmashri, Membership of the Madras Legislative council, etc. Initially, two

men in public life encouraged her as a singer-Satyamurti and K. Srinivasan of 'The Hindu'. Later Kamaraj brought her into political limelight by making her a member of the Legislative Council. S. S. Vasan projected her image as the legendary poetess, Avvaiyar. Three Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu after the advent of the Dravidian parties held her in great esteem - C. N. Annadurai, M. G. Ramachandran and M. Karunanidhi. By her clear enunciation of Tamil words even as she sang in a metallic voice, KBS helped the people to savour the sweetness of the Tamil language. She used her God-gifted voice to promote bhakti and morality. When the 'Kodumudi Koel' flew into the empyrean (September 24, 1980) she left the world of art in Tamil Nadu a little better than what it was when she came.

*I am indebted to 'Vamanan' for this information.

□

OBITUARY

S. Rajaram



Musician and composer S. Rajaram, ex-principal and director of Kalakshetra, passed away on 1st June 2009 at the age of eighty five. Grandson of the great contemporary vaggeyakara Mysore Vasudevachar, Rajaram was working for All India Radio, when Rukmini Devi Arundale, the founder of Kalakshetra, requested him to assist his grandfather Vasudevachar in composing the music for the Ramayana dance drama series which was the beginning of his long association with Kalakshetra. A vaggeyakara himself, having composed a number of kritis, he also scored the music for a number of Kalakshetra productions like Bhakta Jayadeva, Sri Purandara, Akka Mahadevi, Sivageetimala and Dasaru Kanda Krishna.

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SANSKRIT COMPOSITIONS OF SAINT THYAGARAJA

by Dr. Bhuvaneswari G., Selection Grade Lecturer in Music, Maharaja's College, Ernakulam.

Sanskrit language is unique among the various languages of the world and is unsurpassed in its variety, continuity and abundance of thought. It is the longest surviving spoken language, having a tradition of more than 5000 years. In India, Sanskrit has been the language of the learned for hundreds of years using oral tradition for education.

The period 1750-1850 (100 years) is marked as the golden period in the history of world music. It was during this time that many great composers, musical geniuses who contributed a rich legacy to the growth and development of music all over the world, flourished. In South India the Musical Trinity Shyama Sastri, Thyagaraja, and Muthuswami Dikshitar lived and rendered their most valuable contributions. Saint Thyagaraja, an ardent devotee of Lord Srirama, a devout Nadopasaka and Sangeetha Acharya enriched the already sown field of Carnatic music. He ranks supreme amongst the musical Trinity. This era witnessed the emergence of innumerable musical forms. Thyagaraja's

repertoire of varied compositions includes Kritis, Keertanas, group kritis like Ghanaragapancharatnam, Kovur Pancharatnam, Tiruvottiyur Pancharatnam, Sataragaratnamalika,



Lalgudi Pancharatnam, Srirangam Pancharatnam, Utsavasampradaya keertanas, Divyanamavalis, Geyanatakas etc. Even though Thyagaraja's major contributions are in Telugu, his mother tongue, his Sanskrit compositions are quite noteworthy for their literary and musical excellence. Bhakti predominates in his Sanskrit compositions. There are about 57 compositions in Sanskrit including one Pancharatna kriti, 4 Utsavasampradaya keertanas, 15 Divyanamavalis and 2 Lalgudi Pancharatna kritis. A list of his Sanskrit compositions is given below:

S.No.	Name of the Kriti	Ragam	Talam	
1	Bhajare bhajamanasa	Kannada	Misrachapu	Kriti
2	Bhaja ramam satatam	Huseni	Adi	Divyanama kirtana
3	Brindavana lola	Todi	Rupakam	Kriti
4	Dasarathe	Kokilapriya	Adi	Kriti
5	Dehi tava padabhaktim	Sahana	Adi	Kriti
6	Deva rama rama	Sourashtram	Rupakam	Kriti
7	Deva sri thapastheertha	Madhyamavati	Misrachapu	Lalgudi Pancharatnam

■	DevAdi deva	Sindhuramakriya	Adi	Kriti
■	Dinajanavana	Bhoopalam	Adi	Divyanama kirtana
10	Ehi trijagadeesa	Saranga	Misrachapu	Kriti
11	Ganamurthe	Ganamurthi	Adi	Kriti
12	Gatamoha	Sankarabharanam	Rupakam	Divyanama kirtana
13	Girirajasuta	Bangala	Adi	Kriti
14	Jagadanandakaraka	Nata	Adi	Ghanaraga Pancharatnam
15	Janaki ramana	Sudha seemantini	Adi	Kriti
16	Janakaja	Asaveri	Rupakam	Kriti
17	Jayamangalam	Ghanta	Khandachapu	Utsava sampradaya kirtana
18	Jo Jo Rama	Ritigaula	Adi	Utsava sampradaya kirtana
19	Kalasa vardhijam	Ratnangi	Adi	Kriti
20	Kshira sagara	Ananda bhairavi	Khandachapu	Utsava sampradaya kirtana
21	Mahita pravrudha	Kamboji	Tisra tripata	Lalgudi Pancharatnam
22	Mamava satatam	Jaganmohini	Adi	Kriti
23	Manasasancharare	Punnagavarali	Misrachapu	Divyanama kirtana
24	Maravairi	Nasikabhushani	Rupakam	Kriti
25	Nada tanumanisam	Chittaranjini	Adi	Kriti
26	Namo namo	Desiya todi	Rupakam	Divyanama kirtana
27	Niravadhi sukhada	Ravichandrika	Adi	Kriti
28	Pahi pahi dinabandho	Sourashtram	Khandachapu	Divyanama kirtana
29	Pahi paramadayalo	Kapi	Adi	Kriti
30	Pahi rama doota	Vasanta varali	Rupakam	Divyanama kirtana
31	Pahi ramachandra	Sankarabharanam	Adi	Divyanama kirtana
32	Palaya sri raghuvara	Devagandhari	Adi	Divyanama kirtana
33	Paripalaya dasarathe	Sankarabharanam	Misrachapu	Divyanama kirtana
34	Paripalayamam	Darbar	Misrachapu	Kriti
35	Phanipathisayi	Jhankaradwani	Adi	Kriti
36	Raghupathe	Sahana	Rupakam	Kriti
37	Rama eva daivatam	Balahamsa	Rupakam	Divyanama kirtana
38	Ramam Bhajeham	Saveri	Adi	Kriti

39	Samaja varagamana	Hindolam	Adi	Kriti
40	Shambho Mahadeva	Pantuvrali	Rupakam	Kovur Pancharatnam
41	Shambho sivasankara guru	Sankarabharanam	Rupakam	Kriti
42	Sarasanetra	Sankarabharanam	Adi	Divyanama kirtana
43	Seetha kalyana	Kurinji	Khandachapu	Kriti
44	Sobhane sobhane	Pantuvrali	Rupakam	Utsava sampradaya kirtana
45	Sri gananatham	Kanakangi	Adi	Kriti
46	Sri janakatanaye	Kalakanti	Adi	Kriti
47	Sri narada	Kanada	Rupakam	Kriti
48	Sri narasimha	Phalamanjari	Deshadi	Kriti
49	Sri raghuvara	Kambhoji	Adi	Kriti
50	Sri raghuvara dasarathe	Sankarabharanam	Adi	Divyanama kirtana
51	Sri rama rama	Purnachandrika	Khandachapu	Divyanama kirtana
52	Sujana jeevana	Khamas	Rupakam	Kriti
53	Sundaratara deham	Pantuvrali	Adi	Kriti
54	Vara leela	Sankarabharanam	Rupakam	Divyanama kirtana
55	Varada navenitasa	Ragapanjaram	Misrachapu	Kriti
56	Varasikhi vahana	Supradeepam	Adi	Kriti
57	Vasudeva varaguna	Bilahari	Eka	Kriti

Saint Thyagaraja led a very simple, systematic and disciplined life. He kept himself away from material comforts and worldly pleasures. He is described as the king of sacrifices. His Rama Bhakti was staunch and unshakable. He received blessings from Sage Narada, in praise of whom he has rendered about half a dozen kritis, of which one is in Sanskrit language. Chanting of Rama nama, 96 crores of times resulted in Thyagaraja getting a Darshan of Lord Srirama. One striking feature of Thyagaraja as a composer is the variety of songs he has composed for the benefit of mankind.

South Indian music is built up with Bhakti as its foundation. Music and Bhakti are inseparable. Saint Thyagaraja adopted Bhakti as a means to realise the Supreme bliss and attain Mukti.

The Trinity - Shyama Sastri, Thyagarajaswami, and Muthuswami Dikshitar had many similarities. They were contemporaries, born in the same village - Tiruvavur, and were great scholars in Sanskrit, Telugu, Vedas and Sastras. They had divine inspiration. The most notable feature is that the first composition of all the three was in Sanskrit language - the

Deva Bhasha. The first composition of Syama Sastri is 'Janani Natajanaparipalini' in Saveri raga praising Goddess Kamakshi. The first composition of Saint Thyagaraja is 'Namo Namo Raghavaya Anisam' in Desiya Todi raga praising Lord Sri Rama. 'Sri NathAdi Guruguho Jayati Jayati' in Mayamalavagaula raga is the first composition of Muthuswamy Dikshitar praising Lord Subramanya

The peculiar and remarkable feature of Saint Thyagaraja is the perfect unison of prose and poetry. The usage of different verbs and vibhaktis make the compositions unique. Thyagaraja has keenly observed the rules of prosody while introducing the rhetorical beauties like alliterations, different types of prasas, sabdhalanakas - similies, metaphors, Svarakshara prayoga and Yamakam/Slesha bhangam. These add lustre to his kritis.

To quote an example, in the kriti - Shambho Mahadeva (Kovur Pancharatna) in Pantuvarali raga, Rupaka tala, we can see the different prasas. Pallavi and Anupallavi start with "Shambho" which is Adi prasam and Dvitiyakshara prasam. The kirtana is beautified by the repetition of the letter "ra" which is the Anuprasa as seen in the Charana "*Paramadayakara mrugadhara hara gangadhara dharani dhara Thyagaraja varahrudaya surabrinda vara neerajithapatha puravasa paratpara bhavahara*". The use of similies "*Ambhoruha lochana*" - having eyes similar to lotus petals is also seen in this kriti.

Introduction of different eduppus in Thyagaraja's compositions leaves his indelible stamp, making them unique. To

quote a few examples of different eduppus-

1. **Sama eduppu** Sujana jeevana, Khamas raga, Rupaka tala, Ramam Bajeham Sada, Saveri raga, Adi tala, Samajavaragamana, Hindola raga, Adi tala
2. $\frac{1}{2}$ **Eduppu** - Brindavana lola, Todi raga, Rupaka tala, Dehi tavapadabhaktim Vaidehi, Sahana raga, Adi tala(1 kala) Dasarathe, Kokilapriya raga, Adi tala(2 kala)
3. $\frac{3}{4}$ **Eduppu** - Devasri, Madhyamavati raga, Misrachapu tala
4. $\frac{1}{2}$ **Eduppu** - Varada navaneetasa, Ragapanjaram raga, Misrachapu tala
5. $1\frac{1}{2}$ **Eduppu** - DevAdi deva, Sindhuramakriya raga, Adi tala Girirajasuta, Bangala raga, Adi tala Kalasavardhijam, Ratnangi raga, Adi tala

He was a pioneer in laying various kinds of rasas in his kritis. Out of 57 Sanskrit compositions, there are several kritis portraying ganarasa and also various rasas. Svarakshara prayoga is beautifully incorporated in the Pancharatna kriti "Jagadanandakaraka" in Nata raga - 4th, 5th and 6th charanas -

4th Charana : p, n p m p
Pa da vi ji ta

5th Charana : s, p, m, r,
srishti sthithyan

6th Charana : s, np r, s
sajjana mana

The use of Svarakshara is notable in many of his popular Sanskrit compositions like

Nadatanumanisam in Chittaranjini raga, Adi tala and Samajavaragamana in Hindola raga, Adi tala.

Some popular Sanskrit compositions of Thyagaraja are: Jagadanandakaraka in Nata, Samajavaragamana in Hindola, Sita Kalyana Vaibhogame in Kurinji, Shambho Mahadeva in Pantuvarali, Niravadhi Sukhada in Ravichandrika and Sujana Jeevana in Khamas.

The role of Sanskrit during the long period of continuous musical history and tradition is of great importance. Like other languages, Sanskrit was a medium of music from very ancient times. The alphabets of Sanskrit language have been to a great extent highly suitable for music being rendered in Sanskrit. Sanskrit and classical music are so intertwined that different musical forms have been evolved adhering to Vedic traditions.

Music and Bhakti have been intertwined from time immemorial. The term Bhakti owes its origin to the root in Sanskrit 'Bhaj' which has several meanings - 'to serve', 'to honour', 'to love', 'to adore'. In the Bhagavatam, Srimal Narayaneeyam and other Itihasas and Puranas only nine qualities of Bhakti are mentioned. But in the Narada Bhakti Sutra, Bhakti has been elaborated in eleven different forms. The kirtanas of Thyagaraja portray in them the Nava Vidha Bhakti, i.e. Bhakti in nine forms. The Bhakti in the form of Sravanam, Kirtanam, Samaranam, Padasevanam, Archanam, Vandanam, Dasyam, Sakhyam, Atmanivedanam are seen in many of his compositions. The following Sanskrit compositions include Padasevanam and

Dasyam form of Bhakti Padasevanam:

1. Pahirama doota, Vasantavarali raga, Rupaka tala,
2. Niravadhi sukhada, Ravichandrika raga, Adi tala,
3. Devadi deva, Sindhuramakriya raga, Adi tala

Dasyam:

1. Brindavanalola, Todi raga, Rupaka tala
2. Varada navaneetasa, Ragapanjaram raga, Misrachapu tala

Each composition is a raga crystal. In the composition 'Dasarathe' in Kokilapriya raga, the key phrases of the raga are introduced in several places. The tempo is also Vilambita to exhibit the raga bhava. Likewise, the Lalgudi Pancharatna kritis - Mahita pravrudha in Kamboji raga and Deva Sri in Madhyamavati raga are scholarly compositions portraying various shades of the raga. These are only a few examples, which bring about the musical excellence of Saint Thyagaraja.

When we go through the Sanskrit compositions, we find that 30 compositions are in praise of Lord Rama, 6 each in the name of Krishna and Siva, 3 compositions in praise of Vishnu, 2 each in praise of Ganapathy, Parvathi and Sita, 1 each in praise of Subramanya, Narada, Narasimha, Lakshmi, Hanuman and Rama & Sita.

Allusions render colour and spice when incidents and events are portrayed. Thyagaraja's Sanskrit compositions are filled with apt allusions. These references go to show that Saint Thyagaraja had a

deep knowledge of the epics. A few allusions in brief giving the name of the composition are given below.

Composition Name	Allusion	Meaning
Devasri Thapasthirtha	पाशहस्तगणेश हरण	who destroyed the followers of the God of death
Ksheera sagara	शमनरिपु	Siva, the enemy of the Lord of Death - Yama
Jagadanandakaraka	शमनवैरिसन्तुल	the one worshipped by Lord Siva, the killer of Yama
Sambho sivasankara guru	शमनान्तक	the killer of the God of death, Yama
Sundaratara deham	भवभयहरणकालं	who is the God of death in removing the fear of death

Allusion is to the story of Markandeya. Sage Mrikandu had no children. So he did penance and the Lord appeared before him and asked him for his preference - a good son who would die at the age of 16 or many evil boys who would live long. Mrikandu chose the first. Accordingly Markandeya was born to Mrikandu.

Markandeya was a great devotee of Siva

and Vishnu. Only on his 16th birthday did Markandeya come to know that he would die on that day. Yama followed Markandeya to take his life on that day. Markandeya ran to the temple and embraced the idol of Siva. Yama threw his rope around Markandeya and idol together. Siva emerged from the Siva Linga and killed Yama with His trident.

Composition Name	Allusion	Meaning
Dinajanavana	सामज वरद	giver of boons to the elephant
Gatamoha	बरवारणशरण	the refuge to the great elephant Gajendra
Dasarathe	परिपालितेभ	the refuge to the great elephant Gajendra
Namo namo Raghavaya	नागराज पालनाय	who protected the elephant King
Palaya sri Raghuvira	मकरहरण	The destroyer of the alligator
Ramam bhajeham	स्तुतगजराजं	praised by the King of elephants
Sundaratara deham	इभराजपालनं	who is the protector of the elephant King
Pahi Ramachandra	रक्षितनाग	who protected the elephant
Raghupate	वारणावन	protector of the elephant

The reference is to Gajendra Moksha. King Indradyumna was a great devotee of Mahavishnu. While he was praying, sage Agastya came to his palace. Immersed in prayer, the King did not welcome him or show any respect to him. Agastya got angry and cursed him to take the shape of an elephant, but blessed him saying Mahavishnu would free him from the curse.

A Gandharva named 'HooHoo' angered a sage who cursed him to become a crocodile. He was also to be released from the curse by Mahavishnu.

After the above two curses, the crocodile caught the Elephant King Gajendra. The crocodile did not leave Gajendra's leg. Gajendra prayed to God intensely. Immediately, Vishnu acknowledged the deep devotion of Gajendra and killed the crocodile with His Chakra. Gajendra was saved. The crocodile also attained salvation.

An analysis of the Sanskrit compositions of Thyagaraja reveals that Thyagaraja was not a mere Vaggeyakara. His compositions deserve to be termed as the Triveni

Sangamam of Sangita, Vedanta and Sahitya. His kritis are the outcome of total devotion. Bhakti is the essence of his songs. The range of the songs is such that they include simple songs suitable for children and young learners as also very serious compositions catering to advanced students and musicians. The deep divinity, elevated theme and moral values, fervor, smooth and elegant style, the natural rhythm and eloquent language and above all the mastery over the Sanskrit language have made his compositions unparalleled. The scholarship of Thyagaraja in Sanskrit is so profound that he often brings out 'word gems' unseen by ordinary eyes to illuminate his songs. This also brings out the fact that his deep knowledge of Itihasas, Puranas, Vedas and Upanishads is par excellence. Thyagaraja is a master spirit who incorporated in his compositions the bhakti of Prahlada, the music of Narada and the Vakpatutva of Sage Valmiki. Total devotion to the absolute as represented by Lord Ramachandra will give solace, comfort and peace to mankind, this is the message of the great Saint.



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Interview

FRAGRANT HALWA, VELDAARI AND PURE ZARI

by Nalini Dinesh



Smt. Parassala Ponnammal performing at the Sabha with K. Sivakumar (Violin), Rajesh Srinivasan (Mridangam), E. Ganesh (Kanjira) and Bhama K. (Vocal Support)

The mellow notes of the Nattakuranji Ata Tala varnam in madhyama kala emanating from a metallic voice, filled the auditorium that hot and humid Sunday evening. A frail, bent octogenarian was holding center-stage, effortlessly gliding through three hours of vintage, classical music, sans any gesticulation, apart from straining to hear the shruti now and then, and turning to smile at her accompanists. One would hardly imagine that her hips were probably stiff and aching after the first half hour as they were during our tête-à-tête on the previous day. This is Parassala Ponnammal for you, a veteran Carnatic vocalist and

guru, who has recently been discovered by audiences outside of Kerala, her home-state. One can't really make out if she's pleased with this state of affairs though, traveling as she is, nearly every month of the year. Rather, one can see a sense of obligation and indulgence on this genial grandmother's part, not to disappoint the eager sabha secretaries and rasikas, from Chennai to Cleveland.

Ponnammal reverentially remembers her first guru Sri Paramu Pillai under whose guidance she, alongwith her sister, began her musical journey at the age of 7. His

music was marked by swara shuddham and solid pathantaram. Perhaps it is this base which prompts her to put clarity, purity and strength in rendering every swaram, right up there on top, in her advice to students.

Having completed the elementary lessons, and a number of Adi and Ata tala varnams and kritis (she recalls a few like Darini Telusukonti and Koniyadina), her tutelage then continued with one Vaidyanatha Iyer who happened to hear the sisters sing and immediately offered to teach them. This guru's music was more gamaka-oriented. Her repertoire expanded rapidly with many Tyagaraja kritis. Daily practice included akaara sadhakam and varnams, though at a later stage, Ponnammal felt that too much akaaram in the early morning resulted in hoarseness, which made her fall back more on varnams.

Ponnammal's music began to be noticed by the public when she won a local music competition when she was about 14 years of age. Interestingly, the youngster who won the first prize in the boys' competition was Vaidyanatha Bhagavata, recipient of the Sri Shanmukhananda M.S. Subbulakshmi Best Teacher Award for 2008! She even recalls the items she sang for that competition all those years ago, Kalyani varnam and Kalyani alapana followed by *Kamalambam Bhajare!* We need no further evidence of her photographic memory than her concerts, wherein sahitya and sangatis flow easily without memory glitches, although her accompanying vocalists thirty years younger might be prone to one or two!

Engagements to sing at local temple festivals and functions started pouring in after the competition, when one fine day, she received summons from Harikesanallur Muthaiah Bhagavata to join the Swati Tirunal Music Academy in Tiruvananthapuram, in the 2nd year of the 3-year Gaayikaa course. Within months of joining the academy, Muthaiah Bhagavata wrote to AIR Tiruchi recommending Ponnammal for AIR broadcasts. That was the time when M.A. Kalyanakrishna Bhagavata, R.K. Srikanthan, N.V. Narayana Bhagavata, Kumaraswamy Iyer and others were also performing on AIR. The year was 1940.

Ponnammal got a job as music teacher in the local government school as soon as she completed her Gaayikaa course where she worked for ten years. In 1952, the Swati Tirunal Academy started taking in lady teachers and not surprisingly, Ponnammal was the first lady to be offered a position, which she accepted.

Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer had become the Principal of the academy by then. He happened to hear one of her radio concerts and offered to teach Ponnammal. Her tutelage under Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer continued for about four years, during which time she learnt a number of Dikshitar kritis (including *Chetashri* in Dwijavanti and *Shri Satyanarayanam* in Shubha Pantuvaraali) and Ambujam Krishna's kritis among others. Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer tuned a number of Ambujam Krishna's kritis and got twenty of them recorded in Ponnammal's voice to send back to the composer. Her classes with him were

smooth, simply because Ponnammal would notate the lessons as he taught and sing them in the next class accurately. This, even with household duties and a full working day at the Academy. As was the custom with the previous generation of gurus, only kritis were taught. Raaga alapana and kalpana swaram were mostly learnt by listening to the guru as they sang. Interestingly, though Ponnammal learnt from Semmangudi for a relatively short period of time, it is his style that her singing reflects most, especially in raga alapana. She herself cannot explain why, she can only surmise that his kriti pathantaram must have become so ingrained in her that her manodharma reflects the same.

Ponnammal was reputed to be a very dedicated teacher who was ready to start class the minute the bell rang. She would ensure that every student got a chance to sing individually and not only the good ones. Her students would often remark in gratitude that they were saved ("raksha pettu") if Ponnammal was their teacher. She also had the privilege to work under another illustrious Principal Sri G.N. Balasubramaniam. Ever the gentleman and true rasika of music, he used to wholeheartedly appreciate her music, putting to rest her initial fears of acceptance, given their completely different styles of singing.

Truth be told, I, the interviewer, was left quite stumped at the end of our conversation, for there were no profound statements, no well-thought out and articulated opinions, no analytical insights as is usually expected from big achievers. A typical question-answer round went like this:

Q) How do you maintain your voice?

A) I don't do anything special

Q) How do you polish your vast repertoire of kritis?

A) No specific practice, I only teach the kritis to my students.

Q) What about lyrics/sangatis, do you revise just before a concert?

A) I do sing them once with the student accompanying me so that we synchronize.

It only dawned on me later that night as I was dropping off to sleep that the lady was answering me all along, only I hadn't listened well enough. It was exactly those long years of dedicated teaching that had helped hone her kritis (and her voice) and make them her own. This in itself is an achievement, for how many ladies of her generation do we know, who have pursued a career without a break for six decades through marriage, an ailing mother and birth of four children (and sadly, the demise of one)? She acknowledges her sister's support through those years in her usual pragmatic style (with an unmistakeable touch of tenderness though) calling her a Mother Theresa and recalls how the children called for "chitthi" much more than their "amma". She also fondly reminisces on her late husband, who was a gnanasthan and very supportive of her musical career, even accompanying her to her classes with Semmangudi and her concerts.

Apart from innumerable awards in Kerala including the Kerala Sangeet Nataka Academy award, another distinction in Ponnammal's career is that she is the first

lady to have performed in the Navaratri Mandapam of the Padmanabhaswamy temple in Trivandrum in their famed Navaratri festival in 2006, thanks to the efforts of Prince Rama Varma. She recalls with pride Maharani Kartika Tirunal's words on the occasion wishing that she would sing for a 100 years. Her slot is indeed reserved for the next few years to complete singing all the nine Navaratri kritis!

Ponnammal's discography includes a live concert of Swati Tirunal compositions released by Charsur and a double album Prerana released by Swati Soft Solutions. For Doordarshan she has recorded Shyama Shastri's swarajatis alongwith her students. Her thematic programmes for AIR include Navagraha kritis, Utsava Prabandhams, Guruvayur Suprabhatam, Trishivapureswara Suprabhatam, Meenambika Stotram, Bhaktimanjari, and Padmanabhashatakam and those done for the AIR archives: Trinity series, Swati Tirunal series and a series on Kerala composers other than Swati Tirunal like Irayimman Thampi, K.C. Kesava Pillai and others.

Ponnammal has also donned the cap of tunesmith while setting kritis of new composers, like Tolapi Bhagavata.

The child in her starts fretting about the next day's concert even as we wind up our interview, as she's just been requested to sing an RTP for the concert. As it turned out the next evening, there was little time left after the Todi alapana-swarajati suite and Shankarabharanam centerpiece for an RTP, which gave the audience a post-tani experience very different from the current trend. She sang an Ambujam Krishna Athana Kriti Thyagarajanai, Satatam, a Swati Tirunal composition (one of the Navavidha Bhakti series) in Neelambari, a beautiful Swati Tirunal chatur ragamalika Saanandam Kamalamanohari, a Ragamalika viruttam Sayankaale followed by an Irayimman Thampi composition in Surutti Neelavarna paahimaam, and the popular javali Parulannamaata in Kaapi (which was disappointing, especially after these relatively uncommon pieces). I'm not about to complain though, having glimpsed for a few short hours a rich musical legacy, carried forward by this soft-spoken personification of humility.

And to anyone who may be puzzled by the title of this article, her music did remind me of patti's fragrant wheat halwa and the brilliant blue silk saree she used to wear in the traditional veldaari design with pure gold zari that are hard to come by today!

□



PATHANTARAM - A Musical Value (Part-1)

by N. Hariharan

Having listened to quite a large number of concerts over the past few decades, the importance of "Pathantaram" has sunk into me. Indian music is a hoary tradition, passed on, from generation to generation. Its life-breath is microtones rooted in aesthetics, evolved by great masters from times of yore. The style of a singer is an evolving process, but it is founded on the "Pathantaram" he has imbibed from his guru. Indian music is an oral tradition and in olden days was learnt by "gurukula vaasam", discipleship under a great teacher for long years by living with him and doing service to him. Modern-day pupils can acquire it only by individual or collective direct study from a teacher well-versed in the tradition.

"Pathantaram" is the style of rendition which captivates the connoisseur and lay listener alike. The sense of the aesthetic is an inborn gift which our ancestors had in great measure. In present times too we are fortunate to have several gifted musicians who can impart to their students the traditional style and idiom they have imbibed from their gurus. So the importance of personal teaching and individual guidance needs to be recognized by all learners. Thus the continuity of our glorious tradition in music is ensured and passed on to the younger generation.

The Shanmukhananda Sangeeta Vidyalaya students are indeed fortunate that they are taught and guided by faculty who have directly learnt from the great gurus and

performing artistes. The great-grandfather of the Shanmukhananda Sabha Secretary V. S. Amarnath Sury, Krishna Bhagavata had learnt from the saint-savant-composer-teacher Sadguru Thyagaraja, one of the trinity of Carnatic music.

Recounting the lineage of the torchbearers should interest learners and music-lovers. The erudite cultural features writer Lakshmi Devnath has gathered chronological details of the shishya parampara of Thyagaraja which she has detailed in "Sruti" in 2002. That has inspired me to write this piece on the great pupils of the Ramabhakta bard who have spread his musical heritage among succeeding generations. Thyagaraja's disciples learnt from the savant his compositions, each according to his capacity. Over the years the prominent disciples came to be associated with the names of the villages from which they hailed. Thus we have the three traditions linked to Umayalpuram, Tillaisthanam and Walajapet which became well known. It was his scholarship in Sanskrit and Tamil besides music proficiency and above all his expounding the Ramayana in sangeeta upanyasam that drew Vengu Bhagavata (Venkatarama Bhagavata) to Thyagaraja. For six months he daily expatiated on the Ramayana to Thyagaraja and the great Rama devotee readily consented to the bhagavata's request to take as his pupils Vengu Bhagavata's two brothers Krishnan and Sundaram aged eleven and nine

respectively. Thyagaraja, seeing that they were young and raw, gave them preliminary training under one Jagadrakshaka Bhagavata asking him to first teach them "Sree Janakimanohara" in Isamanohari raga. After six months he took them as his disciples. A perfectionist and task master Thyagaraja imposed rigorous practice schedules. The two boys bored by the tough regimen ran away one day to their home. And the guru trudged the distance from Tiruvaiyaru to his friend's house in Umayalpuram. He was relieved to learn they were safe. After Vengu Bhagavata's profuse apologies and dedication of a song he composed in his honour, Thyagaraja excused the truancy and took them back as pupils. Krishnan and Sundaram soon blossomed into fine musicians and became the progenitors of the Umayalpuram tradition. The brothers adopted their guru as their role model. They sang his compositions with total fidelity.

They kept no notes. By oral transmission they trained a large number of students which included nadaswara - vidwans. "Sree Janakimanohara" was always the first song taught, emulating the guru in life too in every way. They lived for 80 years and passed away in 1908 and 1910, leaving a lineage of disciples who propagated the guru's heritage. A portrait of Thyagaraja they worshipped is preserved in the family till today and was used for the postal stamp issued on the bi-centenary of the bard's birthday. During the last years of his life, around 70, Thyagaraja expressed a desire to listen to all the compositions he had composed during different periods and taught to various disciples. This was

conveyed to the earlier shishyas who came down along with pupils of some disciples who had passed away.

The bard was delighted as it gave an opportunity to the later disciples like Walajapet Krishnaswamy Bhagavata, Tillaisthanam Rama Iyengar and Umayalpuram Krishna Bhagavata and Sundara Bhagavata to listen to all the songs composed during early, middle and later periods. They not only learnt them, but preserved them in notation. This accounts for the extensive repertoire of these disciples and the emergence of the Walajapet, Tillaisthanam and Umayalpuram Pathantarams. It is stated Thyagaraja had in all 120 pairs of pupils, and each pair was taught 200 compositions. So the total goes to 24,000. "Swadesamitran" published and popularized some 75 per cent of Thyagaraja kritis handed down the Umayalpuram way. Krishna Bhagavata also performed on the swarabat.

Manjakudi Ramachandra Bhagavata, a grandson and disciple of Sundara Bhagavata had an early start in music and so learnt some 600 kritis of Thyagaraja. A noted vocalist, he was background singer to Embar Srirangachariar at sangeeta upanyasams. He composed a varnam in Kharaharapriya and some kritis, all in Tamil. He also set others' lyrics to music. He was also on the experts committee of the Madras Music Academy.

A noteworthy exponent of the Umayalpuram tradition was Vengu Bhagavata's son Sami (nee Swami) who learnt from Thyagaraja for four years and

later from the Umayalpuram brothers. His co-students then were Pallavi Swaminatha Iyer and Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer. Sami used to conduct bhajana sessions around Madras Kapaleeswarar temple from 4-45 a.m. to 6.30 a.m. to celebrate Dhanur masa (Mid-December to mid-January) singing 45 Thyagaraja "keertanams" in a day, singing a piece in full with all charanams and sangatis (subtle tonal nuances). Thus people used to listen to 500 kritis of Thyagaraja in a month. Famed personalities like Justice Sir T. Muthuswami Iyer, advocate Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer, C. Ramanujachari, author of "Spiritual Heritage of Thyagaraja" and the Secretary of the Ramakrishna mutt, Mylapore, used to join in the bhajana sessions, old-timers say. Sami was an ardent Rama bhakta like his guru. The idols worshipped by him are still worshipped by his descendants in Umayalpuram. He died in 1930. G. Kalyanarama Iyer and Sattur Krishnaswami Iyengar were prominent among his many disciples.

Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer born in 1867 to musician Siva Sambu Iyer had inborn talent which was nurtured by the Umayalpuram Brothers. He also learnt from Vainika Thyagaraja Dikshitar, Kekkarai Muthu Iyer and for four years from Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer who trained his pupils to a high level of accomplishment. Maha

Vaidyanatha Iyer was so pleased with his disciple's vocal support at his concerts that one day he presented him with a tambura and a shawl. Every night Swaminatha Iyer was engrossed in singing Thyagaraja kritis and difficult pallavis. He taught his disciples the 72-mela ragamalika of Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer and the compositions of Ramaswamy Sivan and Anai-Ayya. He honed their singing of niraval and kalpana swaras. He gave chittai swaras to some Thyagaraja kritis. His guru is believed to have given him a manuscript with the arohana and avarohana of 2036 ragas. A much honoured musician, the Kanchi Mahaswami gave him the title "Naadaanubhavasagaragnaana". In 1936 he was awarded "Sangeetha Kalanidhi" by the Madras Music Academy. He died in 1947 at 80 years. Umayalpuram Swaminatha Iyer made significant contribution to the continuance of the Umayalpuram shishya parampara by training a number of disciples some of whom shone as great teachers or performing artistes like his sons Venkatarama Iyer and Rajagopala Iyer, Kallidaikurichi Vedanta Bhagavata, Mudicondan Sabhapati Iyer, Melakaveri Ramamurthy Iyer, Maruthuvakudi Rajagopala Iyer, Maharajapuram Viswanatha Iyer and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer.

(to be continued)

ERRATA

In Jyothi Mohan's review of Lalgudi Jayaraman's operatic ballet *Jaya Jaya Devi*, on Page 37 in the Jan-Mar issue of Shanmukha, the phrase "**unusual mangalam in Kapi**" has been inadvertently printed as "**usual mangalam in Kapi**".

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MUSICAL MUSINGS

by Dr. Sakuntala Narasimhan

Half a century ago, when I joined the Central College of Karnataka Music (CCKM) at Chennai as a student, mine was the first generation of disciples who took to institutionalised learning. My teachers were all from the gurukula system, and most of them at the college were stalwarts or legendary artistes – Musiri Subramanya Iyer was the principal, Tiruppambaram N. Swaminatha Pillai took vocal classes, as did T.Brindamma, all of them Sangita Kalanidhis. Chittoor Subramanya Pillai was also on the staff during that time, as was Sandhyavandanam Srinivasa Rao. All of them were stalwarts, and highly respected artistes. Subsequently I also learnt from another Sangita Kalanidhi, Dr. Sripada Pinakapani. As I look back on what these teachers imparted to us, a few memories surface; memories worth sharing, with the younger generation of performers.

We were taught kritis and other compositions as per the syllabus of course, but what was more precious, important and valuable, were the stray comments that these stalwarts made in the course of their sessions with students.

I remember one class with T.N.Swaminatha Pillai who taught us pallavis which were among his specialties, though he was a flutist. We were learning a pallavi in Todi, and had to sing raga alapana by turns. When one of us sang in the upper register, and took a long gandhara in the tara sthayi, he merely opened his eyes wide, and threw a rapier look at the student (who was sitting

next to me). The singer of course stopped, abashed and frightened. With his dark skin, stocky and squat frame, white hair, and paan-reddened mouth, he could intimidate with just a look. "In Todi," he said, "one does not hold the gandhara steady like that. It can only be with a gamaka." I will never forget that, although I hear many top ranking musicians of today hold that note during alapana. It was a lesson in driving home the point that one cannot learn a raga merely through arohana and avarohana, one had to pick up guidelines about what could be and couldn't be done, through personal interaction with the teacher. You can learn kritis using a tape or CD or notation, but where does one get corrections like this, except through personal interaction?

Similarly, Brindamma once stopped one of us gently, during a lesson in Kalyani raga. In theory, Kalyani and Shankarabharanam differ only in one note, the madhyama which is shuddha in one and prati madhyama in the other. And yet, she taught us that even the notes that are common to both ragas, need to be treated differently in each, to portray the correct raga-bhava – one never holds the rishabha straight in Shankarabharanam, and the gandhara is mostly oscillating in Kalyani (swinging between gandhara and prati madhyama). None of that generation of teachers cared about 22 sruthis (most of them had a healthy contempt for what they called "theory") but they taught it through demonstration. In particular, the nuances

of Kalyani that Brindamma exposed us to, were unforgettable. No book teaches these subtleties.

Brindamma also made a comment once, about why nagaswaram artistes spin out a raga alapana for hours. "They have to keep playing till the temple procession completed the four main streets and returned to base, so they developed a style that delves into improvisations in depth, to last till the entire pradakshinam is complete, which could mean four or five hours." That comment drew my attention to nagaswaram playing and began to hold a fascination for me, especially in developing alapana.

One other guideline that one will not normally find in any books (but was taught to us at the college) was about appropriateness in choosing the line to which one sings kalpana swaras. One cannot sing swaras to a line that begins with a question (Evaru, meaning who, for instance, or Enduku meaning why). One also had to observe discipline in kalpana swaras, by always ending only on the note lower than the one at which the phrase of the song begins. (If the eduppu is on madhyama one has to end one's kalpana swaras on gandhara, not on panchama or elsewhere – of course, many top ranking musicians, including the late GNB, often ended their swaras on a note not only higher but even remote from the eduppu swara, but then established artistes often get away with breaking rules and take liberties, whereas a learner has to strictly observe the codes.)

In Musiri's class in my final year, I

remember, I was once singing some phrases of improvisation and feeling quite pleased with myself (I thought I was doing well) when he suddenly bent forward and roared at me, "Put some soul into it." I was taken aback and broke out crying. I could not suppress my sobs till the end of that class, and being a teenager had no idea what "putting soul" meant. Much later, as I grew up, I understood what he had implied. That was a lesson in mechanical vs. soulful rendering. Again, no book learning will give this kind of advice, even if one can learn compositions and grammar from books, without a teacher.

When I was learning from Dr Pinakapani my father once asked him to teach me Telugu so that I could understand the lyrics of the songs. Dr Pinakapani immediately declared it was "not necessary" because then my attention would get divided between the lyrics and the melody. While it is undoubtedly necessary to get the pronunciation right for the lyrics, is it necessary to know the language itself? If yes, then to what extent? Would a basic and rudimentary familiarity with phrases do? His comment made me ponder over these issues. My students sing a Kashmiri and a Bengali song as part of their repertoire, but none of us knows these languages. We however, did take the trouble to ensure that our pronunciation and phrase divisions are correct.

From my guru for Hindustani music, Ustad Hafeez Ahmed Khan saheb, I learned another valuable lesson that one cannot pick up from books. We were taking turns in improvising alap phrases, and I thought I was doing quite satisfactorily, when at one

point he just sat silent, so I knew there was something wrong. I too stopped and then gently he said, "You know beti, there is a rule that if the guru is restricting himself to notes below pancham, the disciple is also expected to stick to those notes, going higher means that the disciple knows better than the teacher and can therefore go ahead." I can never forget that comment. It was not merely good etiquette but also good musical exercise because one had to spin out improvisations with a restricted number of notes.

Khan saheb also taught me another kind of etiquette. If the disciple had a train to catch (I used to go, for instance, from Mumbai to Delhi, for lessons from him) it was just not done to tell the teacher that it was time to stop because there was a train to catch. That would amount to saying that the train was more important than the lesson from the guru, and of course nothing is supposed to be more important than a lesson imparted by the guru. It was the teacher's job to remember that the student had a train to catch and give permission to stop in time. This actually happened – when I had to catch the Karnataka Express at 8 P.M. to get back to Mumbai, he would make sure to ask me, before the lesson what time my train was, and keep it in mind and stop the lesson in time and permit me to go. Till he gave that permission, I was supposed to keep singing. (Reminds me of the story in the Mahabharata, where Karna sat immobile while his guru slept with his head on the disciple's lap, even when an insect bit him hard, because one was not supposed to disturb one's guru in any circumstances.) That kind of implicit

discipline and respect for the teacher is gone these days (it is the teacher who has to adjust to the students' timings!) but respect for the teacher meant a concomitant respect for the art. It was something very precious, priceless, that one was receiving from the guru and therefore invaluable.

Perhaps it is the absence of this attitude (and the brashness of thinking that one can learn equally easily from a cassette or book) that causes devaluation of one's precious artistic heritage. Learning from a cassette means that one can press a button and "shut up" one's teacher, or press a button again, and make him resume his rendering! Would one dare to do that to a live guru? Unless one has deep reverence for the person who imparts the art, one cannot develop reverence for the art that he imparts as a priceless gift – and Indian music is such that without reverence, the music just cannot have "soul" as Musiri put it.

One young musician who was considered a child prodigy, phoned me once from Chennai and asked me to hum a bhajan over the phone so that he could quickly jot it down and perform it at his concert that evening! In my time, this was just not done, one dared not 'order' a quickie lesson, like ordering a "quick dosa" at a fast food restaurant. I remember the late Seergazhi Govindarajan (who was a disciple of T.N.Swaminatha Pillai during the same time that I was also learning from the maestro) putting down a kriti for his forthcoming broadcast, and then fidgeting day after day because he dared not tell his guru that he wanted to learn the song to be able to

perform it over the radio. He had to wait till his guru himself asked him when the broadcast was and what he was going to sing, and then offer to teach the song. This reminds me of another incident that my guru narrated to me. During the time he was a disciple of Ustad Nissar Hussain Khan, the guru once ordered him to hold a note steady "till I tell you to stop", then his

wife called him in for something and he went upstairs to rest, forgetting the disciple who was holding the note downstairs. A couple of hours later when he came down again, he heard the disciple (my guru) still holding the note, waiting for permission from his guru to stop! That was during the 1940s. We have come a long way since then, but whether for good, is a moot point.

□

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BHAKTI IN NARAYANEYYAM - A journey from the 1st to 100th Narayaneeyam dance recital

by Geeta Radhakrishna



Lord Guruvayurappan

The sweet, lyrical verses of Narayaneeyam, has been my prime choreography in Mohiniattam. My experience while performing Narayaneeyam all these years has taught me one significant aspect of the divine Flute Player - that He is able to mesmerise his devotees with his innumerable Leelas or glorious deeds, as enumerated in the Bhagavatam. He makes his Bhaktas not only sing and dance to his magical melodies but also be the recipient of his countless mercies. That the divine player is a Karunasaagara - an ocean of compassion, is proved beyond doubt. However, the divine Flute Player's mercies, though vast and unfathomable, yet remain unpredictable. No one knows how the beaming rays of his Leelas work. There is no prior information about it nor can one

predetermine it. The magical Flute Player makes it known to you only when you are totally immersed in his Bhakti and when you least expect it.

My journey from the first Narayaneeyam dance recital to the hundredth Narayaneeyam dance recital, is full of pleasant surprises, awkward situations and strange episodes. This journey covers a period of thirty years in my dancing career. During this period, the fact that I was deeply convinced of the extraordinary power of the divine Flute Player goes without saying. The magical Flute player is none other than Sri Guruvayurappan, Sri Krishna, Mahavishnu, Narayana, Gopala or Madhava. Whatever you call Him, He is the One and the only One. In spite of the trials and tribulations

that accompanied this journey of performing Narayaneeyam in the form of dance in different parts of the world, I felt that I was carried like a little child by the Lord Himself, saving me and lifting me above the turbulent waters. Looking back, I am awe-struck as to how I had the strength to perform ekaharya or solo ballets for three hours. Many a time, I felt, it was not me who danced, but it was Krishna who danced it for me. I was a mere instrument on the stage!

As such, I most humbly, yet with conviction would like to conclude that if we beckon Narayana with warmth, He will wave back with a flash of His brilliant smile, if we call Him to play with us, He will play with us the game of hide and seek, if we beg Him for aid, He shall do so at a time most suitable to Him. He will also sing and dance for us most joyfully. Fundamentally, we need to do one thing in order to receive His blessings. That is to have Shraddha or Faith which is the first step towards Bhakti. We have to and need to prove through our Bhakti that we are indeed fit to receive his grace and compassion. Only then, when we knock at his door, will it be opened to us!

A visit to Guruvayur temple always meant a sense of fulfilment for me. A vision of Lord Krishna, resplendent and dazzling in the inner sanctum of Guruvayur temple, was a source of unbelievable joy. To get a glimpse of that beautiful form in a jostling crowd, was enough for me to meditate for a long while. As Narayana Bhattathiripad reveals with great fervour in his 100th Dasaka.

*"Agre Pasyami tejo nibidatara-kalaayaavali lobhaniyam,
Piyushaaplavitham tadanu tadudare divya kaishora
vesham
Tarunyaarambharamyam paramasukharasaaswada
romanchitaangai
Raavitam Naradadyairvilasad Upanishad sundari
mandalaischa"*

Meaning:

"Before me, I visualise a halo of lustre, charming like a bouquet of Kalaya flowers. I am bathed in nectar of bliss! I behold a charming young lad of divinity surrounded by Narada and other sages and a bevy of attractive maidens in the form of the glowing Upanishads."

While in Kerala, I always got an opportunity to visit the Guruvayur temple. My mother - Savithri, was a great devotee of Sri Guruvayurappan. Many a time, I have seen her crying in front of the Lord. Whether it was joyful or sorrowful tears, I could never understand as a kid. But I knew that this was the place where she surrendered all her worries and problems. It was during one such visit during my teenage years to the temple, this time along with my father, that I noticed a picture of Narayana Bhattathiripad in writing posture on the wall of the temple premises. This picture interested me and roused my curiosity. I asked my father about the picture and it was only then, that I came to know of the great genius Mepathur Narayana Bhattathiripad, whose fame in Kerala had spread over 400 years. On my way back from Guruvayur temple to Palakkad, my father purchased the beautiful book of Narayaneeyam, with explanations for me. Like a breath of fresh air, as I opened the book and started reading it, it clicked that

this should be my subject for choreography in Mohiniattam. The incentive was given, I truly believe, by Lord Guruvayurappan Himself!

I began reading Narayaneeyam. It is an incredible religious treatise in Sanskrit language based on Bhagavata Purana. A work of high scholarship, it was not easy to comprehend the meaning. Though the verses were lyrical and rhythmic, yet to put it in music and then to dance was no mean effort either. However, I worked relentlessly at it and was finally able to choreograph fifty one verses from various Dasakas of Narayaneeyam. This included a chapter from Vishnu Avatars (other than Krishna Avatara) and the rest were from Krishnavatara. The dance recital began with the first verse of Narayaneeyam - 'Saandraanandaavabodhatmakam anupamitam kaaladeshavadhibhyam' from Dasaka One describing the 'mahima' or greatness and glory of the Lord and concluded with Keshaadipaada Varnanam - the 100th Dasaka - the awe - inspiring head to foot description with profound Bhakti by the author.

My first performance of Narayaneeyam was at Guruvayur temple in Kerala on 18th April 1977. It was well attended both by laymen and connoisseurs of art. More than the appreciation of the public, I was very happy that I could perform it as a solo recital for about three hours. That too, I performed it with ease and without any pain in my legs. Why I am saying so will become clear now. During my teenage years, I suffered from intense leg pain. When I was taking lessons in Mohiniattam under Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma in Tripunithura, I winced

with pain whenever I was asked to dance in Aramandalam, Mukkaalmandalam or Muzhumandalam (Postures with knees bent and feet placed in Parshva position). After school, I had the same problem in college too. Any physical exercise, whether sports or dance or even long walks produced intense leg pain. The elders had to do uzhichil or massage for me to reduce the pain in the legs. It was a matter of joke to others when they saw my grandmother massaging my legs instead of me doing it for her. I used to cover my legs with woollen socks while sleeping. Whenever, I performed on stage it was an ordeal for me, instead of joy. I thought I would have to give up dance totally.

But with the first performance of Narayaneeyam at the Guruvayur temple, everything changed for me. It is still fresh in my memory. I performed on the Kalyana Mandapam directly facing the deity - Guruvayurappan. During my performance, I could see the glitter and the glow of the deeparadhana inside the sanctum sanctorum. Just like Bhattathiripad appealed to the Lord to cure him of all diseases, I too prayed for good health. I am not exaggerating when I say that I danced in complete bliss without any leg pain on that day. Ever since, the acute pain while performing vanished too. Just as how Narayana healed thousands of his Bhaktas and cured them of their maladies and diseases, He cured me of my frequent leg pains too. That Narayana is a miraculous healer, I was firmly convinced.

After a couple of Narayaneeyam performances in temples, I performed on stage on 7th Oct 1977, at Tejpal auditorium

in Mumbai. This time, Lord Guruvayurappan had, indeed, decided to test my devotion. On that day, torrential rain flooded Bombay. I reached the Tejpal auditorium early enough to do my make-up and hence escaped the heavy rains. But my singer was caught in the rain and could not reach the venue on time. I was at wit's end, not knowing what to do. Meanwhile, the audience became restless and started to make noise. I had no choice but to begin the performance minus the singer. I began my performance with "Kaliya Mardanam"- Krishna humbling the venomous serpent Kaliya - just with drums alone. There was no singing. While performing I prayed to Guruvayurappan to save me from this situation and anger of the audience.

When I completed my Kaliyamardanam with gusto, I was given a thunderous applause for the guts shown to perform without a singer. But imagine, I could not have done this for long - the whole recital without a singer or the verses of Narayaneeyam.

But luckily for me the singer arrived just after I completed Kaliyamardanam.

Thanks to Guruvayurappan! Though the singer was totally drenched in the rain and shaken up too, soon, we proceeded on with the recital in a normal fashion. That was the start of Krishna's pranks - His Leelas - one after the other - on-stage pranks while portraying Narayaneeyam and off-stage pranks which I had to personally face to keep my art alive. That's the strange beauty of being a Krishna Bhakta-putting one through a whole gamut of emotions and adventurous roller-coaster rides.

Ever since, there was no looking back. On 13th Dec 1978, I performed my 13th recital of Narayaneeyam, at the Guruvayur temple, on the occasion of Narayaneeyam day celebrations. My 15th recital was for the Shanmukhananda Sabha for their young dancers' festival on 19th March 1979. My 23rd recital in 1984, 41st recital in 1988, and 72nd recital in 1998, were again, performed at the Guruvayur temple. Apart from India, I have performed Narayaneeyam in England, France, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, USSR and USA.

Early last year, one fine morning, I got up with the shrill whistling sound of an eagle. I looked out of the window, to see a brown eagle with white stripes perched on the branch of the coconut tree. It kept whistling to its heart's content. I thought it was Krishna's messenger for me to perform Narayaneeyam again. And sure enough, I started to perform my 96th, 97th, 98th and 99th recital in a row. The 99th performance was in Warangal in Andhra Pradesh. On my way to this programme, I fell down on my back in the train and was in terrible pain. But I did not cancel this programme, though I was in no fit condition to sit, stand or bend, leave alone dance. But I prayed intensely to carry me through this performance. The Lord heard my prayers and the moment I entered the stage, all my pains were forgotten for the moment. The performance was in an open ground for a large audience. Fortunately, it was successful and well appreciated too. Back home, I was sick with fever and body pain but miraculously got cured without any medicines for my next performance the following week.

My hundredth performance of Narayaneeyam alongwith Radhika, was on 9th Feb 2008, at the Mahalsa Narayaneey temple in Goa, for the Goa Kala Academy. It was a memorable performance. Unlike my 99th performance, where I danced with such anguish and physical discomfort, in contrast, this was smooth, joyous and fulfilling. The mysterious ways of Lord Krishna! After my performance, I was informed, by a member of the audience, that the Prathishta of Narayaneey at this beautiful temple was Vishnu in the guise of Mohini. I was overjoyed to hear this because it was so providential and apt for me to perform my 100th recital of Narayaneeyam in Mohiniattam style before the divine vision of Lord Vishnu as the enchanting Mohini.

Until my 59th recital of Narayaneeyam, I have performed solo. Radhika, my daughter and student, joined me from the 60th recital onwards. After that, we have always performed together until my 100th recital of Narayaneeyam.

Srimad Bhagavatham enumerates various kinds of Bhakti. Bhakti is a Sanskrit word which means to love, to adore and to serve the Supreme Being. Here, the Supreme Being is the **Parama Sundara Purusha - Sri Krishna**. Narayaneeyam, just like Bhagavatham elaborates various kinds of Bhakti through its various stories and episodes. The various kinds of Bhakti are: **1. Saadhaarana Bhakti 2. Sraddha 3. Rati Bhakti and 4. Saadhana Bhakti**. Rati could be further divided into Jnana Bhakti and Prema Bhakti while Saadhana Bhakti has nine different disciplines. They are: Shravanam, Kirtanam, Smaranam,

Pada sevanam, Archanam, Vandanam, Dasyam, Sakhyam and Atmanivedanam.

Narayaneeyam through its various episodes highlights all the above mentioned Bhakti, the ardent devotion and love for Guruvayurappan. Narayana Bhattathiripad, the author of Narayaneeyam, from the first Dasaka to the last Dasaka, bathes himself in all types of Bhakti. While describing the Bhakti of Gopis for their beloved Krishna, where it is Atmanivedanam - everything surrendered unto Him - he is consumed with **Madhura Bhakti** or Prema Bhakti as the supreme form of worship.

Narayaneeyam consists of 100 Dasakas. At the end of each Dasaka, Bhattathiripad appeals to the Lord with fervent prayers to cure him of all his ailments. The author echoes the call of the devotee to his redeemer and begs for shelter - **Sharanagati**. At the same time, he is aware of the purpose of his life - that is to write and sing the glory of the Lord with extraordinary poetic excellence coupled with extreme devotion-**Parama Bhakti**. And above all, to realise the glory, greatness and infinite power of the Highest Reality!

Mepathur Narayana Bhattathiripad, the author of this classic treatise - Narayaneeyam, lived in Kerala during the 16th century. He studied the Vedas, Shastras, Logic and Grammar and gained proficiency in Sanskrit language. The early part of his life was spent in a careless manner. The turning point of his life was when he became the ardent disciple of Achyuta Pisharodi, a sharp intellectual and an expert grammarian. When Achyuta Pisharodi fell a victim to paralysis,

Bhattathiripad was so saddened that while serving his master, he prayed to Lord Krishna to cure his Guru's ailment by taking upon himself the disease of his teacher. The prayer was so intense that it happened that the teacher got cured while the disciple became a paralytic. This is when the genius of Bhattathiripad flowered into exceptional poetry of devotion and brilliance.

Krishnavatara is the main subject of my Narayaneeyam dance recitals. The first and second Dasakas, form excellent opening number, as the slokas praise the glory of the Lord, the protector of the universe, and the faith and devotion required for the Bhaktas to realise his greatness.

In **Balakreedavarnanam**, which projects valsalya sringara, the portrayal of Krishna stealing the hearts of all the cowherd maidens of Vrindavana, enhances the Nritya element of dance. **Vishwarupadarshanam**, captures the Natya element of dance, with a series of emotions, that makes the portrayal in dance lively and captivating. The scene also emphasizes the principle of macrocosm in the microcosm, when the mother wonders at the vision of the entire three worlds in the little mouth of Krishna.

Kaliyamardanam is the enthralling dance of Lord Krishna standing on the dreadful serpent Kaliya. It is the dance of victory over the evil - Dharma over Adharma.

Venuganam is the music of the divine flute player, which captivates not only the Gopis but the entire living and non-living species of Vrindavana. It is said that even the stones melted hearing the mellifluous flute music.

Gopivastrapaharanam is the test for the

damsels to prove that their love is pure, unsullied and selfless. To overcome the impediments that stand in the way of the aspirant for eternal communion with the lord, one has to give up all sense of shame and be like a child.

Rasakreeda – the 69th Dasaka of Narayaneeyam is Bhattathiripad's masterpiece that has attracted not only countless Bhaktas of Kerala but Sanskrit scholars all over India. Krishna dances in supreme ecstasy with the maidens of Vrindavana. The lyrics are superb and ideally suited to Mohiniattam as it oozes out Sringara at its best. The Gopis meditate on the wonderful form of Krishna dressed for Rasaleela.

"Keshapashadhrita pinchhikaavitati sanchalan makara kundalam

Harajaala vanamaalika lalitam angaraaga Ghana saurabham"

The last scene of Narayaneeyam recital takes a leap from the 69th Dasaka to the 100th Dasaka— **Keshaadipaadavarnanam**. Krishna is described with a halo of lustre, which gradually culminates into the full fledged divine form of the Lord, whose beauty is indescribable.

Looking back, I am extremely grateful to Lord Almighty for being able to translate the soul-stirring composition of Bhattathiripad into dance and perform it for over hundred times in different parts of India and the world. I consider it "**hanta bhagyam janaanaam**" a rare luck that was bestowed on me.

But the effort to better, to change, to transform and to progress continues.

Learning will always remain a process - never a destination! □

BODHAKA AWARD FOR VIDWAN KALYANI SHARMA

by Janaki Krishnamoorthi



Smt. Kalyani Sharma (second from left) was presented the Bodhaka Award for the year 2008, instituted by G. N. Dhandapani, under Sangita Kalanidhi T.S. Sabesa Iyer Endowment, on December 26, at the Music Academy. She is flanked by N. Murali and A.K.C. Natarajan. Pappu Venugopala Rao, secretary, The Music Academy, is at extreme right.

Carnatic Music is her passion. And imparting it to students is her obsession. And Vidwan Kalyani Sharma, an eminent Vainika-Gayaki, who was initiated into Carnatic music at the age of eight by her mother, has dedicated a lifetime spanning over five decades to these interlaced facets. Even today at the age of 72, much of her time gyrates around training senior students in vocal and veena. Such dedication can hardly go unrecognised—many awards and accolades have come her way. Latest being the Bodhaka Award conferred on her by The Music Academy, Chennai, in recognition of her contribution to Carnatic Music in general and teaching in particular.

Smt. Sharma, received the Bodhaka award

at the hands of renowned clarinet vidwan A.K.C. Natarajan at Music Academy in Chennai on 26th December, 2008, in the presence of N. Murali-Academy president, Pappu Venugopala Rao-Academy secretary and several eminent musicians, musicologists and music lovers. After the award function senior disciples of Smt. Sharma staged a brief performance – a vocal, veena and violin ensemble which was appreciated immensely by the audience.

"I am honoured to be recognised by such an esteemed organisation. And the Bodhaka award has special significance for me as it was instituted in memory of my Guru Semmangudi sir's Guru Sri T.S. Sabesa Iyer. But awards are incidental and

should not become the ultimate aim for doing something in life." remarks this veteran Guru.

Following her gurus' footsteps she continues to retain the traditional purity of Carnatic music with a firm 'no' to innovation, fusion, gimmicks and modern gadgets.

"Semmangudi sir always maintained that there was little need for innovation in Carnatic music" she recaps, "The musical trinity and other composers have already created a rich repertoire and handed it over to us in a platter. All we have to do is to preserve this treasure by learning the compositions through good gurus, perfecting them, rendering and teaching them properly he would say. And this is what I have been trying to do all along." avers Vidwan Sharma who shuns using contact microphone for veena as she believes the gadget distorts the original tonal quality of the instrument

"Veena is a wonderful instrument and if played properly can reproduce Gamakas and their minute intonations impeccably. I feel every vocalist should learn veena to fine-tune their tonal and gamaka exposition and enrich their performance." advises Smt. Sharma.



INSTALLATION

The bust of Late Shri S. Seshadri, a doyen among members of the sabha, is to be unveiled on 30th August 2009 (Members' Day).

Teaching has always been close to her heart and she has trained many students in India and abroad who have become musicians and teachers in their own right.

Again echoing her Guru Sri Semmangudi's thoughts, who in fact identified the inherent teaching ability in her, she says: "A teacher's responsibility is greater than that of a performing artiste. If performing artistes made mistakes at a concert audience may notice and forget it. But if a teacher made mistakes it will be passed on to students and carried forward through generations. So a teacher has to be more perfect and a good teacher will always be a good performer" reiterates this Guru par excellence who teaches with immense patience and never looks at the clock while teaching.

Smt. Sharma has no lofty future plans, but just to continue her service to Carnatic music in her own way. "I only want to continue singing, teaching and do whatever I can to promote Carnatic music." she says simply.

And her advice to students: "Learn from a good teacher, absorb what they have learnt and practice relentlessly."



Book Review

THE SCORE OF MY LIFE - Zubin Mehta

by P. P. Ramachandran

The Score of My Life - Zubin Mehta

Published by Lotus / Roli

Pages 201; Price Rs. 395/-

The book under review is the autobiography of the great Indian conductor of Western classical music Zubin Mehta. He was born in 1936 into a Parsi family in Bombay, the son of Mehli and Tehmina Mehta. His father was a violinist and founding conductor of the Bombay Symphony Orchestra. The young Zubin studied in St Mary's High School and St Xaviers College. Though slated to master medicine he opted for music and at 19 went to Vienna to learn under the great Hans Swarowsky. Two other world famous conductors Caludo Abado and Daniel Barenboim were his classmates. Zubin's conducting debut was in 1958 in Vienna. In an international competition held in Liverpool he was declared winner and this led to his appointment as assistant conductor in Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Mehta soon rose to the rank of chief conductor when he was made Music Director of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra in 1960, a post he held until 1967. In 1961, he was named assistant conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. This led to the resignation of George Solti the then director as he had not been consulted on the appointment. Mehta became Music Director of the orchestra, and held the post from 1962 to 1978.



In 1978 Mehta became the Music Director and Principal Conductor of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, a position he held for 13 long years, until his resignation in 1991, becoming the holder of the post for the longest period.

Mehta has a special affection for Israel and he was pleased to be made the Music Advisor of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and later Music Director and finally Music Director for Life.

Since 1985, Mehta has been chief conductor of the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in Florence. Additionally, from 1998 until 2006, Mehta was Music Director of the Bavarian State Opera in Munich. Zubin Mehta received praise early in his career for dynamic interpretations of the large scale symphonic music of Anton Bruckner, Richard Strauss, Gustav Mahler and Franz Schmidt. He has

also made a recording of Indian instrumentalist, Pandit Ravi Shankar's Sitar Concerto No. 2, with Ravi Shankar and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He writes of his association with Ravi Shankar with great affection. Ravi Shankar composed "Raagmala" for Zubin and this was a tremendous success. Panditji wrote extensive solos for different soloists. Mehta is a double bassist and one of his most memorable performances was in a collaboration with Itzhak Perlman, Pinchas Zuckerman, Jacqueline du Pre and Daniel Barenboim in a performance of Schubert's Trout quintet in the summer of 1969.

In June 1994, Mehta performed the Mozart Requiem, along with the members of the Sarajevo Symphony Orchestra and Chorus at the ruins of Sarajevo's National Library, in a fund-raising concert for the victims of armed conflict and remembrance of the thousands of people killed in the Yugoslav wars. On August 29, 1999, he conducted Mahler Symphony No. 2, in the vicinity of Buchenwald concentration camp with both the Bavarian State Orchestra and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, sitting alongside each other. He toured India and his home city Mumbai in 1984, with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and again in November-December 1994, with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, along with soloists Itzhak Perlman and Gil Shaham. Mehta worked in collaboration with Chinese film director Zhang Yimou on a production of the opera Turandot by Giacomo Puccini which they took to Florence and then to Beijing where it was staged, in its actual surroundings, in the Forbidden City with over 300 extras and 300 soldiers for eight

historic performances. The making of this production was chronicled in a documentary called The Turandot Project which has Mehta as the narrator.

Zubin Mehta along with the Bavarian State Orchestra performed for the first time in Chennai on 26 December 2005, on the first anniversary of the Tsunami at the world-famous "Madras Music Academy". This special Tsunami memorial concert was organised by the Madras German Consulate along with the Max-Mueller Bhavan / Goethe institute. The team performed to a packed hall of select invitees. Nearly 3000 people turned up including eminent personalities such as Amartya Sen. He also performed in Delhi at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in 2006 with the Bavarian State Orchestra.

In 1999, the United Nations presented him the "Lifetime Achievement Peace and Tolerance Award". Government of India honoured him in 2001 with the Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian award. In September, 2006 Maestro Mehta was one of the recipients of that year's Kennedy Center Honours. Mehta is an honorary citizen of both Florence and Tel Aviv and was made an honorary member of the Vienna State Opera in 1997. In 2001 he was bestowed the title of "Honorary Conductor" of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra and in 2004 the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra awarded him the same title, as did the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in 2006. At the end of his tenure with the Bavarian State Opera he was named Honorary Conductor of the

Bavarian State Orchestra and Honorary Member of the Bavarian State Opera, and the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde Wien appointed him honorary member in November 2007.

Zubin's conducting is renowned for its flamboyance and forcefulness in performance. An interesting anecdote from the book is worth recalling. Before a concert he was conducting, a musician in his orchestra tried to pass him a message. Zubin ignored it—only to discover later that the message was, "Your fly is open". The account is totally honest, even the account of his marital affairs. Zubin is proud of his Indian descent and has never given up his Indian passport.

Zubin quotes with approval the Nobel Laureate Elias Canetti on the role of a conductor. "The conductor is a ruler of the

world. There is no clearer expression of power than in the person of the conductor. He is omniscient. The musicians only have their own parts in front of them whereas he has the complete score in his head or on the music stand in front of him". But Zubin believes that as conductor he is a coordinator, sometimes a supervisor but most of all a communicator. He believes that if he could stop people from being enemies at least for a few hours or help them forget their hostilities he has achieved his aim. Zubin was and is a great success in this laudable aim.

The book has an affectionate Foreword by Ravi Shankar who affirms that "Zubin is a born conductor with music running through every vein in his blood. He has worked for several humanitarian causes and is loved by everyone". A true assessment, indeed.

□

"SHANMUKHA"

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READERSPEAK...

Our reader N. Srinivasan of the Indian Fine Arts Society, Chennai writes...

I read with much interest the article penned on "Sri Kotiswara Iyer" and published in your issue – Oct – Dec 2008.

Please permit me to mention an incident that led to the composition of *Gaanaamuda Paanam* in Jyotiswaroopini raagam, as narrated by Sri R M Sundaram, a student of Sri Iyer, in a lecture-demonstration arranged by the Indian Fine Arts Society, in their December festival in the year 1975. Shri Iyer was very fond of coffee and used to take four or five cups daily, particularly when he started composing following his own formula! He used to have coffee prepared with fresh decoction from the just-purchased plantation coffee powder, fresh hot milk and a huge quantity of sugar and drink the same with satisfaction!

When Sri Iyer lived in Vellala Street, Purasawalkkam, Chennai, his fans and music lovers assembled around 4 p.m. daily to chat with him on music. On seeing his taking excessive coffee daily, one of his well-wishers requested him to desist from the habit by explaining the harm of taking coffee frequently which might affect his health later. Afraid of the consequences Sri Iyer assured him that he would not take any more coffee and composed the song *Skanda Gaana Amuda Paanam*. In the kriti he stressed that "when there is Skanda Gaana Amudam why should one take other paanams".

This popular song is sung in the concert platforms and the subtle difference between Shanmukhapriya and Jyotiswaroopini is explained in the lecture-demonstrations as well.

★ ★ ★

Thank you so much for the review of Poorva carried in the latest issue of Shanmukha. In particular, I would like to thank Smt. Nalini Dinesh for her very perceptive review covering all aspects and the special features of the book. I must say that this is the most comprehensive review of the book yet. Thanks a ton.

Lakshmi Devnath (by e-mail)

★ ★ ★

I enjoyed the write-up by P. P. Ramachandran giving enjoyable anecdotes of the illustrious artistes. I request you to give us more articles about the great yester-year artistes.

P. P. Krishnan (by e-mail)

★ ★ ★

The last, surviving pillar of the much-lauded Classical Carnatic Female Trinity that lent unsurpassed dignity, merit, charm and appeal and ruled and reigned for long, Sangita Kalanidhi Smt. D.K. Pattammal has also left and entered the pages of history. She was a Child of the Freedom Movement and had the unique joy of singing national songs of absolute, authoritative patriotism and vibrancy on platforms adorned by the cream of accredited leaders of virtuous service and sacrifice. She was a Child of Spiritualism, having had the privilege of endearing herself particularly in her younger days to the supreme rasika and vainika, Sri Paramacharya of Kanchi. The merit of such rare privileges may not, perhaps, be fully appreciated by many. Soft, smiling, solicitous, she had a kindly Bharatiya face and a receptive, responsive heart, blessing me in my Garlands mission. The mission and message of such musicians of memorable stature have to be passed on to successive generations for inspiration and emulation.

'Garland' **N. Rajagopalan**, IAS Retd.



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SABHA ROUND-UP

Report by Nalini Dinesh

Inauguration of Sri Shanmukhananda Padma Ranga Chamber Concert Hall 5th April 2009

Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeeta Sabha unveiled yet another innovation this year (in addition to its digital archive of music Kanchi Mahaswami Sangeetha Sangrahalaya), a state of the art chamber concert hall on the 2nd floor of the sabha premises, built with the generous sponsorship of Shri Jaithirth Rao in memory of his late mother Smt Padma Ranga Rao. The inauguration was followed by a concert by Shri T.M. Krishna.

The pleasant function began with Vedic chanting and an invocation by Vidyalaya

students Aditya and Dharini, *Sharanu Siddhi Vinayaka*. Shri V. S. Amarnath Sury, honorary secretary, welcomed the gathering and President Shri V. Shankar gave the background about this new facility. Smt Padma Ranga Rao had been an avid sangeetha rasika and a member of the sabha until her expiry in 1964. When her family wished to commemorate her memory, Shri Shankar mooted the idea of a chamber concert hall.

The concept of chamber concerts, while still in its infancy in Mumbai, has been successfully employed by the French Consulate which holds a 10-day youth chamber festival every year. The educative,



President Shri V. Shankar addressing the gathering at the inauguration of Sri Shanmukhananda Padma Ranga Chamber Music Hall. Shri R. P. Rangaraj and Shri Jaithirth Rao are seated in the first row on the right



Shri T. M. Krishna performing at the Padma Ranga Chamber Music Hall with Mullaivasal Chandramouli (Violin), Arun Prakash (Mridangam) and Anirudh Athreya (Kanjira)

entertainment and elevating aspects of the concept were summed up by Shri V. Shankar. The sabha has seen a sharp reduction in concert attendance in the main hall in recent times, maybe due to easy access to music thanks to technology. Moreover, a more intimate atmosphere is necessary to transfer subtleties of baanis like those of Brindamma and Ramnad Krishnan. Many artistes are known to give of their best off the concert platform, like the legendary Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer whose improvisations reached magical realms during his teaching sessions. As Jaithirth Rao stated in his address, big halls demoralize upcoming artistes. T.M. Krishna provided the performer's perspective – there is less effort involved in transmitting nuances. In modern concerts which are

unthinkable without elaborate sound systems, digitization destroys the original resonance of the voice, and the mike acts as a security blanket. Mike-less chamber concerts present the singer's voice as it is.

Shri R.P. Rangaraj (husband of the late Smt Padma Ranga) was felicitated with a silver lamp and Tanjore painting, and their son Shri Jaithirth Rao was honoured with a silver lamp. The architects of this hall, acoustics and seating of which, have been specially designed to ensure clear transmission of sound to the last row of the audience with minimum electronic intervention, Shri Sundar Shetty, Mujeen, Dinesh Gandhi and Amit were felicitated and Shri N.S. Sunder Rajan, honorary secretary, Board of Trustees and nuclear

scientist, who had been the primary force behind the successful execution of this project, was introduced to the gathering. Dr. V. Rangaraj, Vice President proposed a vote of thanks.

T.M. Krishna's concert following the inaugural function seemed to validate President Shankar's contention that artistes seemed to give of their best in more friendly environs rather than the regular concert platform. Beginning with the Isamanohari kriti *Shree Gananatham Bhajare* with kalpana swaras, Krishna went on to do an elaborate Varaali alapana followed by the Purandaradasa kriti *Ille Vaikuntha* with neraval and kalpana swaras in trademark Semmangudi style – there were about 20 single avartana kalpana swaras! An excellent Yadukula Kambhoji alapana followed for *Kalai Thookki* which seemed to be in a little too long-drawn chowka kaalam. *Shiva Darushana* in Shuddha Dhanyasi preceded a Mukhari alapana for *Paalisemma Muddu Sharade*. The post-main segment had *Manasa Sancharare* and the famous Navarasa Raagamalika shloka followed by *Sa Pashyat Kausalya*. Khamas, Dhanyasi, Sahana, Sindhubhairavi, Saranga, Kambhoji and Jonpuri were used in the shloka, with one raga portraying 2 rasas. The listener experienced the essence of each rasa even though some of the ragas used to portray some rasas are not usually associated with those rasas, for instance, Kambhoji for Raudram or Saranga for Bheebhatsam and Hasyam, or Sindhubhairavi for Adbhutam. It was a delectable and deceptively effortless glide from the penultimate raaga Revati (Mahadeva Shiva Shambho) to the

finale *Madhyamavati* (Mangalam Kosalendraya).

Sangeetanjali to Kanchi Mahaswami 5th April 2009

The same evening, T.M. Krishna gave another marathon concert at the Chandrasekharendra Saraswati hall as Sangeetanjali to the Kanchi Mahaswami. Some of the highlights of the concert were the Keeravani kriti *Punniyam Oru Koti* on Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, the Dikshitar kriti *Anandeshwarena Samrakshitoham* sung in the Anandabhairavi as specified in that venerable tome *Sangeeta Sampradaya Pradarshini*. An interesting snippet provided by the artiste was about Smt D.K. Pattammal's rendition of this kriti in the presence of the Paramacharya, who was so moved by the rendition that he requested her not to sing it again on a concert platform!

Other highlights were *Kali Narula*, a Tyagaraja kriti in Kuntalavarali, bhava-laden chowka kala kalpana swaram for *Shri Subrahmanyaya Namaste*, RTP in Atana and a shloka in Yamunakalyani (Karunaras Poorna Sudha) composed by violinist R.K. Shriramkumar on Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati. The pallavi composed by the mridangist Arun Prakash had an unusual eduppu and challenging spacing of sahitya.

Mullaivasal Chandramouli's violin accompaniment was classy while Arun Prakash on the mridangam and Anirudh Athreya on the kanjeera ably supported and played excellent tani avartanams for both concerts. □

மனதைக்கவரும், ஜனாருஜ ராகம் (4), 21. 'வழிகள் ஆறு' என்று கூறும் இராகம் (8), 25. சூரியனும், சந்திரனும் 'காய்' விடாமல் தரும் ஒளி (7), 26. 25ன் விடையுடன் - தி.மு.க.வின் சின்னத்தின் முதல்பாதி பேரைச் சேர்க்கவும். (நடுவே ஒரு கட்டம் இடைவெளி - அப்போதுதான் உதித்ததால் கொஞ்சம் சோம்பல்) 3+7 (10), 29. மேளமும் அதுவே (8), 32. முதல் கீதத்தின் ராகம் - மனத்தின் அழக்கை நீக்கும் (4), 33. 'நெனருஞ்சினாறு' (3), 35. - - - ஸஹஸ்நாமம் (3), 36. நாரதர் கையில் இருக்கும் இசைக்கருவியின் பெயருள்ள இராகம் (3), 37. ஒளியே வடிவமானவன். கடைசி மூன்று எழுத்து ஒரு நடிகையின் பெயருமாகும் (7), 42. இதை நன்றாக சேர்த்து, மீட்டி, ஸ்ருதி சுத்தமாக பாடினால் . . . பரமஸுகம் (4), 44. முப்பெருந்தேவிகளில் - கலையரசி (5), 45. மன்னர் அக்பரின் அவையின் நவரத்தினங்களில் ஒருவர் - பாடகர் (4).

Across (Reverse) : 7. சிவ குடும்பத்தின், மூத்த குழந்தையின் காது (மற்றொரு பெயரும் உண்டு) in Sanskrit (4), 14. அரசவை (4), 17. கலைத்தெய்வம் பச்சை இலைகள் விற்கிறார் (4), 19. மங்களம் தரும் அம்பிகை 'அவள் மனம் கல்லும் இல்லை, அணியும் இல்லை' (4), 34. காமாசுமி ஸ்வரஜதியின் ராகம் (3) 3வது எழுத்து 33 உடன் பங்கு கொள்கிறது, 40. துரிதகாலத்தில், ஐதியுடன் பாடும் (ஆடும்) ஒரு உருப்படி (4), 46. புனிதமான ராகம் (3) 47. 'மணி'யின் பெயர் - ஹிந்தியில் (3), 48. ரக்தி ராகம். துக்கடாக்கள் அதிகமாகப் பாடப்படும் ராகம். ஒரு நடையின் பெயர் முதல் மூன்று எழுத்து + கடைசி 3 எழுத்து ஒரு பெரிய பாஷாங்க ராகம் 3+3 (6).

Up : 7. சாந்தரஸம் தரும் ராகம் (2), 10. போக்குவரத்து விதிகளை மீறி, ஒரு ஆட்டோ ஓட்டுனர் போல, குறுக்கு வழியில் எதிர்பாராமல் நுழைந்த செல்வ வட்கமி 2+1 (3), 11. செல்வத்துடன் வெற்றி வட்கமியும் கிடைத்துவிட்டார் 3+1 (4), 13. வேள்விகளில் விருப்பமுள்ளவர் (5), 15. ஒரு வகை மான் - ஒரு வைணவக்கடவுளின் பெயரில் முன்பாதி (4), 16. நாடு (2), 18. 'வாழைப்பழத்தின் ஒரு ரகம்' போல் ஒலிக்கும் ரஸமான ராகம் (3) 22. 'ஸரிஸமானமென்' என்று Spencer வேணுகோபால் ஒரு பாடலியுற்றியுள்ளார் (3), 38. வேத மாதா - இசைக்கும் / ஸங்கீதத்துக்கும் மாதா (3), 44. பிரபல தமிழ்திரைப்பட இயக்குனரின், பிரபல தொலைக்காட்சி தொடர் 'ஸஹாலே - சரிதாணர்' (3), 47. ரக்தி ராகம். வட இந்திய இசையில் ஒரு 'தாட்' உள்ளது. (3)

Down : 1. அமுதை மழையாகப் பொழியும் ராகம் (8), 4. ஆறுமுகனுக்குப் பிடித்த ராகம் என்ற பொருள் தரும் (7), 5. வழிபட்டால் வழிதருபவர் (7), 6. கச்சேரி களை கட்டவில்லை என்றால், பாகவதர் மூக்கால் அழுது ----- பாடினார் என்று இந்த ராகத்தை வம்புக்கு இழுப்பார் (3), 8. ராகத்தின் முதல் எழுத்து காவை இழந்து முட்டான் எனப்பெயர் தருகிறது. (3) 17. ஆரம்பவரிசைகள், அலங்காரம் வரை கற்றபின் சங்கீத மாணாக்கர்கள் கற்கும் அடுத்த பாடம் (3), 19. ஜலதோஷத்துக்குமுன் தொண்டையின் நிலை + சிவனுக்குப்பிடித்தமான என்ற பொருள்தரும் ராகம் (7), 23. ஒரு 'தரம்' மணிபோல் ஒலிக்கும் (5), 24. வட்கமியின் கணவரின் மனத்தைக் கவர்வன் என்ற பொருள்படும் ராகம் (7), 27. சிவனார் தலையில் குடும் பிறையின் 'பளிர்' ஒளி (5), 28. ச்யாமா சாஸ்திரிகளின் 'கீத்' நாயகி (3), 30. தமிழ்ப்பண்களை மாலையாக தொடுத்தால்? (5), 31. புல்லாங்குழல் - BMK என்பவரின் முத்திரை. அவர் இந்த ராகத்தில் ஒரு பாடல் இயற்றியுள்ளார் (3) 39. வீசும் தென்றலை 'வஸப்படுத்தித்தா' (4), 41. இஸ்லாமியப் பெயர் + சைன்யம் (கொஞ்சம் பைரவி சாயல் உள்ள ராகம்) (3), 42. வட இந்தியரின் செல்வத்தை 'யோசி'த்து 'யாசி'. (4), 43. காவையில் பூக்கள் பாளம்பாளமாக மலரும் நேரத்தில் பாடும் ராகம் (4), 49. கச்சேரி ஆச்சா? - - - பாடிடலாமா? (5), 50. கொஞ்சம் பொறுமை. 49 பாடியாச்சா கோஸலேந்திரனை அழைத்து தோஷங்களை நிவர்த்தி செய்யலாமே (6).

Answers will be given in the next issue. English version will follow in the next issue



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